

Mississippi Civil Rights Activist Attends President's First State of the Union Address as Congressman Childers' Guest

January 27, 2010

Washington, DC – Tonight, Mrs. Gertrude Bridgeforth, an 86 year-old Civil Rights activist from Southaven, Miss., attended President Barack Obama's first State of the Union address as Congressman Travis Childers' (MS-01) only guest.

Mrs. Bridgeforth previously came to Washington, DC in January 2009 to attend the President's inauguration. (A story about her trip ran in the Washington Post on January 18 [[Washington Post](#) , 1/18/09]). On Inauguration Day, Mrs. Bridgeforth traveled the entire length of the National Mall on her walker, but held a ticket for the purple gate that famously experienced security problems and was unable to get into the actual ceremony.

"It was so unfortunate that Mrs. Bridgeforth came all that way in January to see the President's inauguration and couldn't get into the ceremony," said Congressman Childers. "My wife Tami and I wanted to make things right. Mrs. Bridgeforth has a long and distinguished history of serving her community, and I was honored to have her as my guest. I recognize that there were many others who had similar experiences at the inauguration, and I'm glad to have had the opportunity to right at least one wrong."

Mrs. Bridgeforth is a resident of Mississippi's First Congressional District, represented by Congressman Childers. In order to set things right, the Congressman invited her to be his only guest at Wednesday's State of the Union address. The ticket was previously held by the

Congressman's wife, Tami. Upon hearing Mrs. Bridgeforth's story, Tami gave up her ticket and asked Mrs. Bridgeforth to attend in her place.

Mrs. Bridgeforth will land at Memphis International Airport on Thursday around 2:00 p.m. CT.

Mrs. Bridgeforth was involved in the Civil Rights Movement in the 1950s and 60s, and marched with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in Memphis when riots broke out on Beale Street. Her father was a Civil Rights activist, and Mrs. Bridgeforth used to drive him to meetings where he would urge African Americans to register to vote.

In 2006, Mrs. Bridgeforth received the Volunteer of the Year award from the Mississippi AARP. Her long history of civic activism and community service includes registering African Americans to vote in the 50s and 60s and serving as a volunteer at the National Civil Rights Museum in Memphis for 15 years.

A pro-gun, pro-life Mississippian, Congressman Travis Childers (D-MS) represents the First Congressional District in North Mississippi. He is a member of the fiscally conservative Blue Dog Coalition and serves on the House Agriculture and Financial Services Committee. Congressman Childers co-chairs the reestablished bipartisan Congressional Rural Caucus and was appointed to the bipartisan Second Amendment Task Force. For more information, visit www.childers.house.gov